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Hill, Hon, David J. LL.L
(Assist. Sec State)

Address

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GREATER AMERICA.

ADDRESS

BY

HON. DAVID J. HILL, LL. D.,

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE.

DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL BANQUET OF THE ROCHESTER
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, DECEMBER 8, 1898.

WASHINGTON, D. C.
JUDD & DETWEILER, PRINTERS.

1898.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Chamber of Commerce:

It is with a thrill of peculiar pleasure that I greet you here tonight. A wanderer upon the face of the earth, I feel like a returning mariner when the light of his home flashes out over the sea to salute him, and a great wave of emotion sweeps from memory the dreary days and perilous nights of a long and tempestuous voyage. My country—with what patriotic pride I call it mine!—never seemed so great, its people so noble, its future and theirs so full of hope and promise. A great crisis, bravely met and victoriously passed, lifts a country, as an individual, to a prouder elevation than before. When last I met with the members of this Chamber the roar of Niagara blended with the voices of the speakers, but a power greater and more irresistible than that of the great cataract has changed the destiny of twelve millions of human beings, and a more potent voice has commanded the action of this nation and called it to their rescue. Incidents of an unparalleled nature have kindled a conflagration which all the waters of Niagara could not quench. The miraculous feats of our small but illustrious navy fill the world with wonder, and indicate more eloquently than human words that the path of the Republic to its place among the nations lies in the broad highway of the deep. Our little army, the smallest of any great power in the world, has swollen in a few months to a mighty host, gathered from every quarter of the Union, the workshop and the field, the

lonely ranch and the fashionable club, eager to follow a common standard and shed its blood upon a common battlefield. Many a pale face has turned for the last time to the silent stars of a tropic sky, and a subtler foe than whistling bullets has racked with agony the mute sufferers in our fever-stricken camps. Thousands of brave volunteers have almost wept with disappointment because they could not press to the front, but when History completes her roll of heroes and tells their fateful story the untrembling hand which records the solemn judgment of the world will write:

“They serve as well who only stand and wait.”

Had Napoleon won the victories which have been achieved under the wise leadership of our great President, a new empire might have been called into being and this sober Republic have been suddenly swept from an era of industrial peace into an era of unbounded conquest and imperialism. But that mistaken word “imperialism,” suggested by the unexpected fruits of victory, does not express the motives and sentiments of this nation. The American people have not coveted territories beyond the sea. They have engaged in war not for land, but for humanity; not to multiply their possessions, but to vindicate their principles. Empires are made by personal ambitions, but the history of our great moments of victory is the roll-call of sacrifice. The struggle for independence reached its culmination in Washington’s refusal of a crown, and the perpetual union of the States was sealed by a bleeding nation’s supreme renunciation in the martyrdom of Lincoln. In the solemn moment when the ways parted at the mile-stone of intervention in the

tragedy of Cuba's wrongs,—the one leading to national humiliation, the other to manifest duty,—the serene voice of our great, peace-loving statesman, William McKinley, whose large intelligence turned with sadness from the sweet vision of peace, recalled to the nation the noble sentiment,

“He is thrice armed who hath his quarrel just.”

Then, panoplied in the confidence of the people, he who was the last to abandon peace stood first in the hour of war, not to acquire new dominion, but to extend the rule of justice.

And now that victory has placed the fate of twelve million human beings in the hands of a triumphant nation, with what right does a spirit of criticism, which derives its inspiration from conditions that have ceased, stamp with the word “imperialism” the magnanimity of this Republic in extending the sheltering wings of its protection over those whom the war has liberated from oppression and misrule? The momentous question presented to the Government of the United States by the results of the war has been: “Having attempted by humanitarian intervention, and without ulterior purposes, to stop the horrors of a perennial strife, shall the American people, for fear of new responsibilities, hurl these millions back into the abyss of anarchy?” That is the question which our Commissioners have tried to answer at Paris, and which this nation must answer before the Throne of Eternal Justice.

What, now, will our national legislators do with the territories ceded by Spain to the United States? Will they restore them to the vengeance of the vanquished? Will they

leave them to the occupation and partition of other powers? Will they abandon them to their own inexperience and internal discords, or will they attempt to establish within them the conditions of peace and ultimate self-government?

There is nothing novel in the idea of territorial expansion, which has marked every period of our national history. Only a little strip of territory along the Atlantic seaboard was peopled by the victorious colonies at the close of the war of independence, but the American Commissioners were instructed to claim for the colonies the whole area east of the Mississippi. Franklin, the most astute diplomatist of his time, coveted in addition the whole of Canada. In 1803 Jefferson strained the Constitution to the breaking point, as he believed, to secure the purchase of the great province of Louisiana, which at one stroke doubled the area of the country. His opponents considered his act not only unconstitutional, but in effect a dissolution of the Union; and a historian has accused him of "making himself monarch of the new territory, and of holding, against its protests, the power of its old kings." Jackson did not hesitate to invade and conquer Florida for the peace of the nation, Texas came into the Union by revolution, and the entire tract which now forms the prosperous States stretching from Mexico to Oregon was the fruit of war and forced occupation. Thus, by continued territorial expansion, the better part of this continent has become incorporated into the United States, and from a few scattered settlements along our eastern coast, a great nation has been formed, bounded by two oceans, with widespread commerce over both, and not one human being in all this vast continental area regrets for a moment

the historic necessities which have given to our united Republic a common law and a common liberty.

New conditions of existence have swept away forever the fears and misgivings which were felt at every thrilling act in this great drama of continental expansion. Undreamed of facilities of transportation have wrought this wonder and rendered possible the unity and solidarity of so vast an enterprise. The power of steam locomotion has carried westward a vigorous race, planting homes like those of New England upon the sunny slopes of the Pacific, and our original western boundary, the Mississippi, has become the central waterway of a united nation, bordering upon widely separated seas. Is our expansion to be bounded by these great waters, or will the annihilation of space by mechanical energy permit of a still wider horizon? Having won from nature and untitled claimants the possession of what is most desirable upon this continent, shall we henceforth renounce all dominion upon the sea? Shall we declare that the ocean, whose broad bosom makes the whole world one, has only perils for our commerce and our polity? Jefferson, indeed, once said that our national ambition should be limited to possessions that would not need a navy to defend them; but that was long ago. Could he contemplate the map of the United States today, an area connecting the two great oceans of the temperate zone, and believe, in the presence of modern battle-ships, that our present territories could be defended without a navy? Could he imagine that the late war could have been conducted, or that our seaboard cities could have escaped destruction without a navy? Would he not rather believe that, with friendly neighbors on the north and south

and our points of exposure chiefly on our coasts, our principal need of defense is a still greater navy?

We seem, indeed, to have renounced our hope of primacy upon the ocean by suffering the decline of our mercantile marine, and that, too, in an era when the forces of industrial production have far outstripped the development of markets. In 1860 the merchant navy of the United States was, after that of England, the largest in the world. Seventy per cent. of our foreign trade was then carried by our own vessels, but the proportion has declined until now all but 11 per cent. has been taken from us, while England's carrying trade has in the meantime doubled; yet, notwithstanding this, our annual trade with Asia and Oceanica has grown to \$62,000,000, nearly twice our entire trade with Central and South America. Our exports to China have trebled since 1890, and our entire volume of trade with that country is now equal to that of the whole of continental Europe, outside of Russia. The Far East has become the land of promise for the merchant, and Civilization, full-grown, having made the circuit of the globe, returns with priceless treasures to its primitive cradle, to lay them at the shrine of its nativity.

Having created and developed our industries by a judicious system of protection until we can successfully compete with foreign nations by the greater inventive powers of our people and the more extended application of machinery, shall we now refuse to protect our commerce? Shall we forget that we are no longer merely an Atlantic, but have become also a Pacific power, with five thousand miles of coast line on the Pacific ocean? Shall we forget that the people of the Great West will be more closely in sympathy with their fellow-citizens of the East, if they also have their

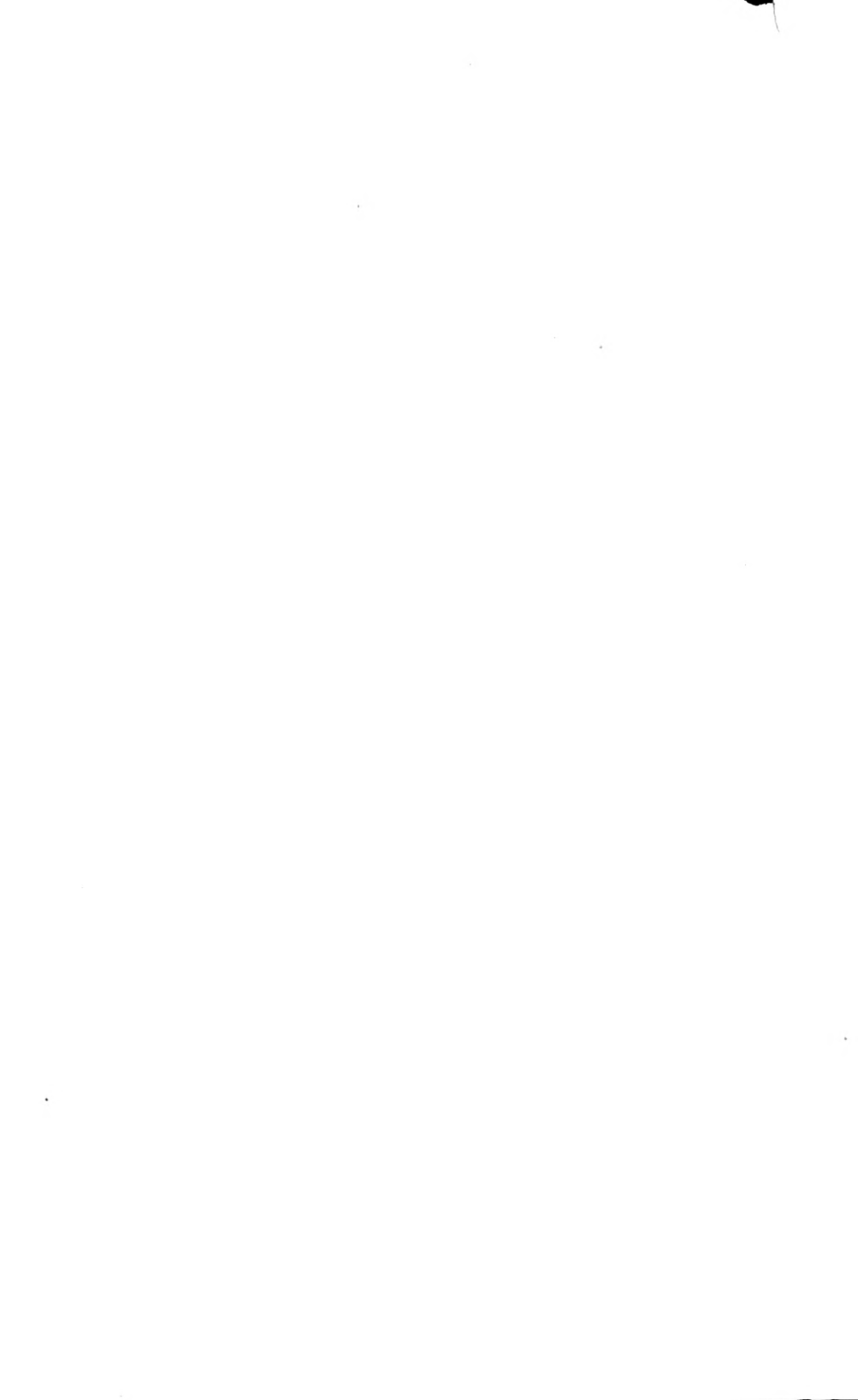
maritime cities and their proportion of international trade? And, finally, shall we forget that the political subdivision and commercial occupation of Asia by foreign powers involves the perpetual isolation of this continent?

The destiny of nations is not determined by the individual will, nor can national duties be measured by private standards. Nations grow by obeying the instinct of development, an instinct planted in them by Him who holdeth the sea as in the hollow of his hand. Their greatness is not in the breadth of their heritage, nor in the fertility of their lands, nor in the wealth of their mines. Little Israel has given the law of righteousness to the ends of the earth; little Greece has shaped the humanities for all time; little Holland, pushing back the sea with one hand, has distributed the wealth of the world with the other; little Switzerland has shone like a star of Heaven, guarding her liberties among the snowy fastnesses of her Alpine peaks and glaciers; little New England has nurtured her Puritans and sent forth her teachers of self-government; but it is one mission to prepare the seed, another to scatter it. I cannot believe it an evil for any people that the Stars and Stripes, the symbol of liberty and law, should float over them. There have been those who have thought otherwise, but they have returned with penitence and confession when their dream was ended. There was a day when the sovereign power of this nation was thought to conflict with the rights of individuals and communities to go their ways and shape their own destinies, but one of the most precious fruits of the late war is the new evidence that the nation has a truer instinct than the individual. When a lady congratulated "Joe Wheeler," as we lovingly call him, upon his promotion

as major general, the brave old soldier burst into tears and said: "It is not that, Madam, which gives me most pleasure; it is to have fought under the dear old Flag that bears the Stars and Stripes!"

Greater America will lose her greatness if she forgets the political philosophy that has made her great. The vital principle of that philosophy is the sovereignty of the people, which in the last analysis is only another name for the fact that in every humblest creature possessing intelligence there is a spark of that Divine Reason which animates the world. It is a great lesson of the war that it is not in the tonnage of ships, nor in the weight of armor, that the fate of battles rests. "These are Her Majesty's ships," says the Spaniard; "These are *our* ships," says the American; and your pleasure yacht, with a Wainwright in command, sends the terror-striking destroyers to the bottom of the sea! The sovereignty of the people behind the guns and in the trenches, whether the soldier be a New York dude or a Texas ranchman, speaks in his aim and in his heroism; for he does not merely represent, he helps to constitute, the sovereignty of the nation.

A giant's task now confronts the American people, but their history gives the assurance that they will not tremble before it. Amid the din of war and the strife of nations, in the busy marts of trade and among the distant islands of the sea, dwells an unseen force slowly shaping the destinies of the world. It speaks alike in nature, in the human soul and in the long drama of history. Witness a nation rising to the full splendor of its responsibilities, and you will see there written in letters of shining light, the august and imperative law of universal development.



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